

Grand Portage National Monument General Management Plan Newsletter 2

Dear Friends:

Thank you for your comments and suggestions for improving Grand Portage National Monument and planning for its future. Your comments and ideas were, and continue to be, instrumental in devising future guidance for the Monument that will be gathered together in a *General Management Plan*. In this second newsletter, we utilized some of your ideas and organized them into draft alternatives. We again need your advice, suggestions, and comments on these alternatives or the elements that make up each alternative.

As a reminder, general management plans provide the guidance for overall management of all national park system areas. This process requires that we develop a range of possible alternative future conditions and management strategies for the site. The final plan will consider the purpose and significance of the national monument in determining resource preservation, visitor use, development needs, and information/education issues for the next 15 to 20 years.

This newsletter is the first opportunity for you to respond to different preliminary alternatives. Your comments and suggestions will help in the selection of a preferred alternative, which will be published in a *Draft General Management Plan* and made available for review later this year.

Although public review meetings will be held on the *Draft General Management Plan* sometime this spring following the expected distribution of the plan, you may provide comments on the preliminary alternatives outlined in this document. Please send your comments to me at the address below. They are critical to insure we construct the best possible future planning for this important site.

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HOW THE ALTERNATIVES WERE DEVELOPED

During the week of August 23-27, 1999 the general management planning team, consisting of monument staff and a representative of the Grand Portage Band of Minnesota Chippewa along with representatives from the National Park Service's Denver Service Center, Harper's Ferry Interpretive Design Center, and Midwest Regional Office, met to develop preliminary alternatives for future management and development of Grand Portage National Monument. Your comments from the public scoping meetings held in June and from Newsletter #1, along with those of park staff and management, were all considered in the development of the alternatives.

We have winnowed through the comments and used those ideas that we believe we can accomplish and that are pertinent to the General Management Plan. Fortunately, the vast majority of comments speak directly to realistic desired outcomes at the Monument. Some of the public comments received have reached beyond the scope of the General Management Plan to suggest specific solutions to problems. These are valuable ideas and we will refer to them again when we reach the future planning stages. Funding and staffing issues, for example, will be addressed by the monument's *Strategic Plan*, and detailed interpretive needs by the *Comprehensive Interpretive Plan*.

Other comments revolve around things that we must do regardless of planning initiatives. Since much of basic park management is specified in laws, policy, and mandates, issues that fall into this category will not be addressed through alternatives. Examples of such issues are lack of basic resource data, access for the disabled, tribal and public involvement in decisions, protection and preservation of indigenous species and natural processes. We strive to meet these mandates in each of the alternatives developed.

The remaining comments were related primarily to visitor use, interpretation, and education. Taken together, the comments have been organized into a series of major decisions that the General Management Plan needs to make, while remaining consistent with park purpose and significance.

DECISION POINTS

Four decision points were identified during the scoping process. These points are the questions around which alternatives were developed. They are as follows:

1. To what extent can visitor services (including orientation) and facilities be provided at Grand Portage National Monument without impacting natural and cultural resources (especially historical character)?
2. To what extent should the national monument's built environment and interpretive focus be on the 1790s golden era of the fur trade while including larger attention to Ojibwe heritage and history?
3. To what extent can administrative and support services and facilities be efficiently and effectively provided without impacting resources?

4. To what extent does the national monument partner with other agencies to further common needs and to fulfill the NPS mission at the site?

HOW TO EVALUATE THE ALTERNATIVES

Four draft alternatives follow. We describe existing conditions and three alternatives that provide for change at the site. From this, the reader can compare the effects of implementing the alternatives to the existing conditions.

Each alternative is built upon a different underlying concept that is reflected in the alternative title. Concepts were developed out of a desire to provide for a variety of visitor experiences and levels of resource protection. Each concept is translated into specific actions in management zones. Six management zones have been devised: visitor services, resources trust, recreation, park operations, primitive trail, and interpretive-historic. The zones would be managed to achieve a variety of resource conditions and visitor experiences. For example, the resources trust zone would be managed to protect sensitive resources such as in-the-ground archeological resources, wetlands, or rare plants. The location and extent of the more heavily used and managed zones will vary with each alternative.

Implementation of any alternative depends on funding. A general management plan provides analysis and justification for future funding, but in no way guarantees that money will be forthcoming. The plan will establish a vision that will guide year-to-year management of the site. Full implementation of the plan could be many years in the future.

You may like some but not all elements of one alternative, or you may like a concept but disagree with the way we have translated that concept into actual visitor experiences or resources protection in the park. Maybe you have an entirely different vision that would solve major issues far better than any here presented. This is the kind of feedback that will help us to formulate the best possible future for this site.

THE ALTERNATIVE CONCEPTS

Alternative A: Existing Conditions/No Action

This alternative is presented mostly for comparison with the action alternatives. The emphasis of this alternative would be to continue with the current management direction. Under this alternative, there would be no significant change in interpretation and the way the park is being managed.

Coordination would continue with agencies and other groups. However, there would be very little change on the site, or improvement of visitor facilities.

Some concerns with this alternative:

- *The management staff of the national monument remains 35 miles away from the resource.*

- *The monument remains essentially a five-month per year operation.*
- *Many of the interpretive themes cannot be fully explored or presented to the visitor due to the physical constraints of the existing resources.*
- *Staff housing and site maintenance continue to intrude upon the historic resources.*
- *Visitor safety concerns remain with County Road 17 bisecting the monument.*
- *Many of the existing facilities, e.g., parking lot and ranger station, diminish the historical character of the stockade area.*

Alternatives B, C, and D

The remaining three alternatives share some common goals, but also have important differences. Here are the similar items shared by alternatives B, C, and D:

- Construction of a year-round Heritage Center for visitor orientation/interpretation, greatly expanding community educational programming.
- Removal of the present parking lot and "ranger station," provision for parking elsewhere. Visitors would arrive at the stockade by foot or shuttle bus from the west.
- Removal of seasonal housing, maintenance shop, and ranger station. This would improve the viewshed and the historic character of the site, and protect sensitive cultural and natural resources.
- Removal of the Isle Royale ferry off-site to another location on Grand Portage Bay.
- Fort Charlotte would remain largely as it is, with a slight increase in interpretation of the site.

Alternative B: Fur Trade with Maritime Emphasis

This alternative emphasizes the site's historic connection to Lake Superior. It also requires that visitors have adequate background information to set the stage for their visit to the stockade and lakeshore. Therefore, a Heritage Center would be constructed in the current "Isle Royale parking lot" to provide the visitor with an orientation to the history of Grand Portage—the economic story, the geographic story, and the cultural story. Three buildings--possibly the Blacksmith Shop, Fur Store, and Clerk's/Interpreters Quarters—would be reconstructed within the Stockade to expand upon the themes of local trade with the Ojibwe and the role of tradesmen. This alternative calls for a dramatic growth in the maritime history of the site, with the reconstruction of a historic vessel, the *Otter*, and a historically accurate wharf. The Portage trail and Fort Charlotte would remain largely unchanged, with more interpretive information about these sites provided for hikers, canoeists, and other visitors. A separate headquarters facility and ranger and seasonal housing would be constructed outside of the park, off of but close to, the Grand Portage Indian Reservation. A combined reservation/park maintenance facility would be constructed either on monument lands or just outside.

Some concerns with this alternative:

- *There is adequate land at the Isle Royale parking area to construct only a small Heritage Center and parking without visually affecting the historic landscape.*
- *Reconstruction of structures within the stockade could adversely impact archeological resources.*
- *A reconstructed ship would be expensive to build and maintain and difficult to operate safely for visitors. This would necessitate a significant expansion in staffing.*
- *Staff inefficiency and extra costs of not having headquarters and Heritage Center in the same location.*
- *Visitors walking from the Heritage Center (at the Isle Royale parking lot location) will have to cross County Road 17, which may be a safety issue.*
- *Leaving County Road 17 as it is in front of the Canoe Warehouse and stockade impinges on the historical character of the site and diminishes the visitor's experience.*

Alternative C: "Fur Trade and Ojibwe Heritage"

Alternative C proposes a cooperative, year-round Heritage Center on Highway 61 on Grand Portage Band lands and a heightened emphasis on educational services (museum and library) and Ojibwe heritage. The site would also be attractive for partnerships with other agencies. Headquarters would be part of the Heritage Center. During the height of the summer season, a shuttle would be provided to the stockade. Three buildings--possibly the Blacksmith Shop, Fur Store, and Clerk's/Interpreters Quarters--would be reconstructed in the Stockade. This would allow for interpretation of local trade with the Ojibwe and the role of tradesmen. To improve the historical character of the site, County Road 17 would eventually be moved to cross Grand Portage Creek north of its present location, connecting roughly between the Trading Post to below the Holy Rosary Church. The Stone Bridge would remain as a walkway. County Road 17 would also be realigned west of Mt. Rose. The landscape east of Grand Portage Creek would be managed to emphasize interpretation of the 19th and 20th century history of the Grand Portage village. A short accessible trail on the eastside of the creek would provide a short hiking loop trail. An Ojibwe Cultural Demonstration Center featuring more contemporary exhibits and demonstrations of Ojibwe life would be designed in the area northeast of the stockade. The historic wharf would be reconstructed and the park's maritime component would be modestly expanded with small boats and canoes. Ranger and seasonal housing and maintenance would be constructed outside the national monument but within close proximity.

Some concerns with this alternative:

- *Reconstruction of structures within the stockade could adversely impact archeological resources.*
- *Realigning the roads around Mt. Rose and an upper crossing of Grand Portage Creek is a great change for Grand Portage residents and will be costly.*
- *Partnerships with other entities can entail extended negotiations and planning and are dependent upon a shared common purpose.*

- *Visitors stopping at the Heritage Center might not take the time to visit the stockade or portage site.*

Alternative D: "Heritage Center Focus"

The Heritage Center Focus title refers to the high level of importance placed on a comprehensive new Heritage Center in this alternative. Because the visitor season at the monument is currently five months, a large, full service Heritage Center could provide a satisfying year 'round experience utilizing the most up-to-date exhibits and interpretive media. During those months when the stockade is closed, the heritage center would provide the bulk of the visitor experience. During the summer, some of the programs and interpretive staff would move to the stockade. Historic structure locations within the stockade would be "ghosted" in some way to allow the visitor to visualize what the site looked like during 1793. The landscape would not be restored. Rather it would be maintained as lawn for special events. A separate headquarters structure and park housing would be constructed outside the national monument and the reservation, and maintenance would be constructed offsite within the reservation but within walking distance. Interpretation of Fort Charlotte would increase at the visitor center. To improve the historical character of the site, County Road 17 would eventually be moved to cross Grand Portage Creek north of its present location, connecting roughly between the Trading Post to below the Holy Rosary Church. The Stone Bridge would remain as a walkway.

This alternative would have the most modest maritime component, including only expanded canoe programming.

Some concerns with this alternative:

- *The focus of interpretation at the site could shift from the stockade to the Heritage Center with some visitors not taking the time to see the stockade.*
- *Ghosting of structures could adversely impact archeological resources and would not improve the historical character of the stockade.*
- *Ghosting structures may not satisfy the visitors' desire to see reconstructed structures within the stockade and would provide no interior interpretive demonstration or exhibition space.*
- *The Heritage Center structure could be so large that it and parking could be difficult to place within the landscape without being intrusive.*
- *Initially leaving County Road 17 as it is in front of the Canoe Warehouse and stockade impinges on the historical character of the site and mars visitors' experience. Until it can be removed, CR 17 would remain a safety hazard.*

WHAT IS NEXT?

The next step is to get your comments on these preliminary alternatives. Your ideas and comments are key to preparing a viable plan for this important site. The plan needs to provide ways for the National Monument to be a good neighbor in the Grand Portage community while protecting the site's resources. Please take time to let us know what you think.

Also, please be aware that due to public disclosure requirements, the National Park Service, if requested, is required to make the names and addresses of commenters public. This typically occurs in sites in which there is great controversy in park plans. You may request that your name and address not be released. The National Park Service will then determine whether the information can be withheld under the Freedom of Information Act, and we will honor your request to the extent allowed by law. If you wish us to withhold your name and/or address, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your comment. We will make all submissions from organizations or businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, available for public inspection in their entirety.

PLANNING TASKS AND SCHEDULE

Preparing the draft GMP/EIS		
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Data Gathering and Analysis Initiate consultation with agencies, Grand Portage Band, Cook County Commissioners, and others (complete)• Prepare public newsletter (complete)• Public scoping open houses (complete)	May-August 1999
2	Alternatives Development Develop alternatives (complete)	Sept-November 1999
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Preparing the Draft GMP/EIS Produce Draft GMP/EIS for internal NPS review• Publish/distribute Draft GMP/EIS for public review tentative June 2000• Public review/meetings tentative June 2000	Dec 1999-Mar 2000
4	Preparing the Final GMP/EIS Analyze/respond to public comments <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Produce final plan• Receive approval on Record of Decision• Distribute final GMP	Feb-Sept 2001

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE PLANNING TEAM MEMBERS AND TRIBAL PARTICIPANTS

- Curtis Gagnon, Representative of Grand Portage Band of Minnesota Chippewa
- Tim Cochrane, Superintendent, Grand Portage National Monument
- Pam Neil, Chief of Interpretation, Grand Portage National Monument
- Dave Cooper, Chief of Resource Management, Grand Portage National Monument
- Craig Cellar, Job Captain, National Park Service Denver Service Center
- Ken Tu, Natural Resources Management Specialist, National Park Service Denver Service Center
- Marla McEnaney, Cultural Landscape Architect, National Park Service Midwest Regional Office
- Don Kodak, Interpretive Planner, National Park Service Harpers Ferry Interpretive Design Center

With input from other staff of Grand Portage National Monument and the Grand Portage Band of Minnesota Chippewa